

P R E S S R E L E A S E

World's largest group of slaves recognised in the run up to UK's first Anti-Slavery Day

Today marks the UK's first Anti-Slavery Day.

Modern slavery expert Professor Kevin Bales says that India *"may have more slaves than all the other countries of the world put together"* and with the majority of slaves in India being Dalits, there seems no better people to highlight on this landmark day.

Dalit Freedom Network UK (DFN UK), the human rights charity, used the run up to the UK's first Anti-Slavery Day to raise awareness of the trafficking of India's Dalit people. Dr Joseph D'souza, International President of the Dalit Freedom Network and internationally renowned writer and campaigner on behalf of the Dalit people, participated in a week of events focused on highlighting the vulnerability of the Dalit people to human traffickers.

Dr D'souza commented, *'The UK having a specific Anti-Slavery Day is a really important signal to the world that no country can escape the problem of human trafficking. There is much to be gained from India and the UK working together and sharing learning to tackle this heinous crime.'*

The week of events began with a Parliamentary reception. Lord Alton, who voiced his support for the commemorative day in a speech back in March, hosted the reception which reinforced the attention he brought to the problem of Dalit trafficking.

Following the reception, DFN UK hosted a series of interviews and meetings culminating in a multi-media event held in the midlands. The organisation was also mentioned on Thursday in the House of Commons when Jeremy Lefroy MP said of DFN UK that *'the network does tremendous work in India'*.

Regarded as outcasts, India's Dalits, numbering 250 million people, one quarter of India's population, have faced thousands of years of discrimination. Limited access to opportunities which could better their futures has made them one of the world's poorest people groups.

Discrimination and poverty make the Dalits easy prey for human traffickers. The result: the Dalit people are believed to make up almost half of all those trafficked into modern slavery in the world today.

DFN UK also used the week to urge the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to recognise that the trafficking of Dalits is a major human rights issue by covering it in their annual human rights report.

For more information please go to the DFN UK website and also to YouTube where the video launching DFN UK's anti-trafficking campaign can be viewed:

Website: www.dfn.org.uk

YouTube: 'Dalit Freedom: One by One' <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NFzPS8C7pQY>

Issued: 18 October 2010

Sources: Hansard 5 March (Lords) and 14 October (Commons)

Notes to editors:

- Dalit Freedom Network UK (DFN UK) is a working name of Freedom Network International, a charity registered in January 2008 in England and Wales.
- DFN UK is a non religious, non-partisan organisation.
- DFN UK has an office in London, and workers in various locations across the UK.
- DFN UK currently comprises: 7 trustees; 7 part time volunteers; 1 part time employee.
- The aim of DFN UK is to bring an end to the trafficking of Dalit men, women and children into various forms of modern day slavery by specifically focusing on educating and leveraging support from the UK while working with Indian and other international partners.
- DFN UK is unique as it is the only organisation in the UK focused on the issue of Dalit trafficking.
- DFN UK launched a UK focused three year programme in 2010. The foundation of the programme is educating the British population about the problem of Dalit trafficking in order to gather support for the anti-trafficking programme both in the UK and in India. The support will come in the form of fundraising, UK advocacy, and physically support anti-trafficking programme activities, generating support from individuals in specific professions such as legal, healthcare, victim care, witness protection, to provide targeted advice and assistance to key areas of the anti-trafficking programme. This three year programme is the first programme undertaken by DFN UK. The organisation's previous function was to facilitate Indians championing the Dalit cause engaging with the UK public and politicians on an occasional basis.
- **For further information please contact:**

Lucy Khoneizer
Media and Communications
DFN UK
Tel: 07858 519760
E-mail: lucy.khoneizer@dfn.org.uk